**Facultade de Filoloxía**

# A Study of the Main Grammar Features of Multicultural London English (MLE)

**Un estudo das principais características gramaticais do Inglés Multicultural de Londres**

**Un estudio de las principales características gramaticales del Inglés Multicultural de Londres**

Alumna: Raquel Graña Oujo

Titor: Ignacio Palacios Martínez

Curso: 2018/2019

**Xuño 2019**

Traballo de Fin de Grao presentado na Facultade de Filoloxía da Universidade de Santiago de Compostela para a obtención do Grao en Lingua e Literatura Inglesas.

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USC UNIVERSIDADE DE SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA FACULTADE DE FILOLOXÍA



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**Título:**

*A Study of the Main Grammar Features of Multicultural London English (MLE)*

In the last few years a new variety of English has emerged in the city of London which is known as Multicultural London English (MLE) or 'Jafaican', that is, a pseudo or fake Jamaican, due to a large number of its speakers coming from the Caribbean or Africa. One can say that MLE has developed as the result of language contact and second language acquisition with a large proportion of young speakers. This sociolect is particularly interesting because it shows a number of innovative grammar features that are worthy of attention.

This paper will be then particularly concerned with the analysis of this variety by looking in detail at some of its main grammar features, such as the following: quotatives or verbs that serve to reproduce the words pronounced by other speakers with special attention to the new quotative *this is* + pronoun (e.g. this is him: 'blah'), *man* as a new pronoun (e.g. before I got arrested *man* paid for my own ticket to go to Jamaica), negative concord or double negatives (e.g. but *never* heard *no* more about it), *never* as a temporal negator rather than as a universal one (e.g. I *never* done nothing), invariant tags such as *innit* and *you get me* (e.g. we got two separate rooms *innit*?), *proper* and *bare* as adjective intensifiers (e.g. *proper* strict, *bare* addictive), general extenders (e.g. *and stuff*) and placeholders or general reference nouns (e.g. *thingy*).

For the description of all these features I will be mainly using the studies by Cheshire, Kerswill and their research team together with the London English Corpus, which includes the Linguistics Innovators Corpus (LIC) and the Multicultural London English (MLE).

The paper will be roughly divided into the following parts: Introduction, definition and origin of MLE, attitudes of speakers to MLE, description of its main grammar features together with the discussion of examples extracted from the previous corpora and general conclusions.

SRA. DECANA DA FACULTADE DE FILOLOXÍA (Presidenta da Comisión de Títulos de Grao)

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

LIC → Linguistics Innovators Corpus

MLE → Multicultural London English

MLEC → Multicultural London English Corpus

OED → Oxford English Dictionary

RP → Received Pronunciation

SBE → Standard British English

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

In the last few years a new variety of English has emerged in the city of London which is known as Multicultural London English (henceforth MLE) or 'Jafaican', that is, a pseudo or fake Jamaican, due to a large number of its speakers coming from the Caribbean or Africa. One can say that MLE has developed as the result of language contact and second language acquisition with a large proportion of young speakers. This sociolect is particularly interesting because it shows a number of innovative grammar features that are worthy of attention. MLE is the voice of young London. It is a language spoken by all ethnic backgrounds and its influences are also multicultural. It is a mix of sounds from plenty of places such as Asia, Caribbean, Greece and Africa. MLE is more recent than *Received Pronunciation* (RP) and Cockney accents since it emerged in the late twentieth century.

In terms of geography, it is important to highlight that London is the biggest city and the capital of England. It is situated near the Thames seashore and it became an important human settlement since it was founded by the Romans almost two millenniums ago. The city developed thanks to the river Thames which had only one bridge for centuries (called London Bridge), but it was not until the eighteenth century when more bridges were built so that its expansion could go in every direction (Karpowicz, Jeremiah; 2018. The Monumentous: Why the Tower Bridge is more than just a bridge. Taken from: <https://themonumentous.com/tower-bridge-just-bridge/>).

All in all, this study will be then particularly concerned with the analysis of this variety by looking in detail at some of its main grammar features, such as the following: quotatives or verbs that serve to reproduce the words pronounced by other speakers with special attention to the new quotative *this is* + pronoun, e.g. '*this is* her: do not touch my clothes!'; *man* as a new pronoun, e.g. '*man* was not there when she arrived home' (Cheshire, 2013); negative concord or double negatives, e.g. 'he *never* does *nothing* useful' (Palacios, 2013); *never* as a temporal negator rather than as a universal one, e.g. 'I *never* got nothing' (Palacios, 2010); invariant tags such as *innit* and *you get me*, e.g. 'you are seventeen years old, *innit*?' (Tubau, 2014); *proper* and *bare* as adjective intensifiers, e.g. '*proper* intelligent', '*bare* lazy' (Núñez & Palacios, 2018); general extenders, e.g. '*or something like that*' (Clancy, 2016) and placeholders or general reference nouns e.g. *'stuff'* (Núñez & Palacios, 2015).

For the description of all these features I will be mainly using the studies by Cheshire (2013), Kerswill (2014) and their research team together with the London English Corpus, which includes the *Linguistics Innovators Corpus* (LIC) and the *Multicultural London English Corpus* (MLEC).

As will be seen, MLE is not a common language shared by every single person in London. It is not even a common dialect, but a variety of a common intelligible dialects and accents. These ones share a certain amount of similarities, which distinguish them from the *Standard British English* (SBE) dialect and the English accent, known as *Received Pronunciation* (henceforth RP). Accordingly, in chapter two I will go through the definition of this new sociolect (section 2.1) and the history of MLE, from the late twentieth century until today (section 2.2). A summary will be provided of the most important events that helped MLE develop to what it is at present.

Another main point to go through in chapter three will be the different attitudes that MLE speakers take or have taken with regard to this new accent in such a short period of time.

In addition, it will be shown that MLE speakers show features of SBE in their speech. This knowledge of the 'Standard' variety is the product of a series of educational and social factors which have overtly impinged on the linguistic experiences of individuals, prescribing the correctness/incorrectness of certain constructions (Adger, David & Trousdale, Graeme; 2007). Many of those individuals who acquire SBE much later than their native variety and informant judgements about SBE do not necessarily reflect the individual's I-language: they may be judgements which are informed by explicit teaching or implicit reinforcement of norms. In chapter three, the lexical, syntactic and grammatical features of MLE will be mentioned and explained in contrast and comparison to those of SBE, alluding to the influence that the former has on the later accent.

Chapter four scrutinises the main lexical and phonologic features of MLE, whereas while, in chapter five the MLE main grammar and discourse features will be established, as well as comparisons between MLE and RP.

All in all, the investigation will show how varieties emerge as a result of a combination of factors such as geographical differences, sociolinguistic circumstances,

as well as cultural, historical and political issues, thereby with the discussion of examples extracted from the previous corpora and putting into practice the knowledge acquired during the degree in such courses as *English Grammar*, *History and Culture of English Speaking Countries* and *History of the English Language*.

## 2. MULTICULTURAL LONDON ENGLISH

### 2.1. Definition of MLE

The first appearance of the MLE term as an entry in the *Urban Dictionary* was in 2012 and it says:

> *'Multicultural London English is the cultural change in the English language due to influences from various cultures, such as Jamaican. Originated in London (due to be such a multicultural area) and quickly spreading to other areas of the United Kingdom (UK) through use and also through grime music. It is the first time English Language in the UK has been changed nationally by the teen age group. Usually areas had their own slang words, but MLE is quickly becoming the standard slang throughout the UK' (Urban Dictionary,* 2012).

This definition amplifies and develops Jafaican's entry in this same dictionary; however, it does not make a specifically allusion to London's speech (Kerswill, 2014):

> *'Jafaican is a dialect of English becoming more common in London's West End, within the tradition boundaries of the Cockney dialect: within the sound of the Bow bells and is slowly replacing Cockney. Jafaican is a mixture of English, Jamaican, West Indian and Indian language elements'* (*Urban Dictionary*, 2006).

All in all, Cockney and RP are varieties of Englishes spoken in the capital of Britain and, with the passage of time, a new variety emerged in the twentieth century known as MLE. It can be said that it is similar to a dialect, which incorporates not only words that come from other languages but a big number of different pronunciations of people that speak English and are from foreign countries all over the world. This sociolect has its origins in the early 1980's as a result of mixed languages shifted to English in different parts of the capital of UK where there was a high percentage of immigration. It also takes some characteristics that derive from Cockney. Nowadays, both MLE and Cockney are trying to live in the same place; however, it is important to highlight that MLE is advancing with huge steps compared to Cockney in the sense that MLE is spoken by London youth and is becoming more and more popular whereas Cockney is regarded as an old fashioned dialect (Osmond, Andrew; 2017. SOAS Blog:

The rise of MLE, innit? Taken from: https://www.soas.ac.uk/blogs/study/multicultural-london-english/ ‘last access 13/5/19’).


Figure 1: ‘County of London’ – Source: <https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/tna/20141203195554/https://www.london.gov.uk/priorities/environment/clearing-londons-air/working-london-boroughs/london-borough-air-quality> ‘last access: 7/1/19’.

MLE is seen as a fashionable and stylish sociolect and its term was used with the meaning of something desirable in youth culture. It was created with the help of the disclosure of a mix of languages and accents that acquired a distinctive shape. This is what makes MLE so characteristic from other types of varieties. It could be said that MLE is an ethnically neutral variable repertoire with different features. Young people in London do not recognize that they talk Cockney as was usually the case, but a slang associated to a dialect that sounds ‘black’. It could be said that MLE is an ethnically neutral variable repertoire with different features; many innovations have become part of a new London dialect.

Furthermore, there has been an increment of people from other countries, from different origins, coming to the capital of England; which ‘at present time, became home to people from no less than 179 countries (Bergs & Brinton, 2017; Vertovec, 2007). In addition, Coleman suggests that:

> ‘*MLE speakers are primarily working class, both black, white and brown, i.e. Asian (…). It appears that the lexis has also been adopted, probably to a lesser extent, by middle-class speakers, in the same manner that some took on Estuary English, and before Mockney’* (Coleman, 2014: 69).

Focusing on London and considering the terms *language* and *dialect*, it is difficult to place MLE under these two words. A *language* is ‘the system of communication in speech and writings that is used by people of a particular country’ (Wehmeier, 2000: 530); it is a means of communication used by people with their own cultural, political and ethnical identity (in this case we would be talking about RP). On the other hand, a *dialect* (like Cockney) is ‘the form of a language that is spoken in an area with grammar, words and pronunciation that may be different from other forms of the same language’ (Wehmeier, 2000: 414). In view of these definitions, it would seem that MLE cannot be classified as a dialect, but it cannot also be defined as a language in the strict sense of Wehmeier’s (2000) nor Hickey (2014) terms.

Accordingly, here MLE would be considered a variety of English or, concretely, a *sociolect* which consists in ‘a variety of a language, which is typical of a certain social group’ (Hickey, 2014: 287). It’s important to say that ‘sociolects may play a role, for example, in the formation of the RP, which derives from a city dialect but which has long since become sociolect’ (Hickey, 2014: 287). This is what happened in London with the English spoken in Middle Ages and the dialects spoken nowadays, Cockney and MLE.

## 2.2. Origins and historical background

To start with, London is England’s capital and where United Kingdom’s Government can be found. The city of London was founded by the Romans and their reign lasted from 43 A.D until the fifth century A.D, date when they were defeated (Civitatis Tours SL. Civitatis London. History off London. Taken from <https://www.londoncitybreak.com/history#> ‘last access: 8/1/19’). Because of the constant invasions by the Anglo-Saxon during the fifth century, London (or *Londinium*, as the Romans used to call it) started to decline. Consequently, London turned out to be Essex’s capital in the eighth century and later, in the following century, the Vikings

began to attack the capital several times. In view of this, Danish people settled down there and made of this place the first urban centre of England.

The eleventh century is considered as a new beginning, a new period for the English territory. William Duke of Normandy (or William the Conqueror) became the new king of England and, during his reign, the symbolic Tower of London had its origin to defend themselves from Vikings' attacks. Later during the Medieval period, one of William the Conqueror's children, called William Rufus, had the idea of building the hall of the Palace of Westminster, which became the prime royal residence throughout that period. It is important to bear in mind that during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, violence against Jewish people took control of London's territory (Civitatis Tours SL. Civitatis London. History off London. Taken from <https://www.londoncitybreak.com/history#> 'last access: 10/1/19'). However, it was not until the following century when they were obliged to move from that place because of the big number of murderers, among other reasons. Furthermore, another important aspect to consider in English history was the War of the Roses during the fifteenth century. In the middle of this event, the House of York counted on London as part of their purpose against the House of Lancaster. Yorks ruled the most part of the time, until Henry Tudor appeared. With him the House of Lancaster took the throne and held it during the following century. However, who reigned England in the seventeenth century was the House of Tudor because of Elizabeth I's death.

Once everything came back to calm, London suffered the Industrial Revolution in the eighteenth century and became the main point of the British Empire development. What also happened in this period was the printing press progress; this was quite important for the news availability for the rest of the society. In the nineteenth century, the capital of England turned into a big city which included a large number of immigrants and refugees from different conflicts around the territory. Due to the great poverty of that moment, lots of Irish people moved to this city and settled down running away of the Great Famine. Later on, during the twentieth century, there were two huge wars: World War I and World War II. London was a big influence because it was one of the largest empires in history. But this could not stop the German bombing raids during the wars, where lots of citizens got killed and also lots could escape to the countryside to save themselves. In the following years, London people were able to recover from all

those tragedies. In addition, at the beginning of the twenty-first century the capital of England got humungous projects, such as the Millennium Dome, the London Eye or the celebration of the Olympics in 2012.

## 2.3. MLE language process

Once the main historical facts have been explained, we can turn now to deal with the principal subject of this section: all the process that language had to go through in London. So, MLE phonological system will be briefly clarified and, in this way, we will know how MLE was originated and how it became into the sociolect that people know nowadays.


Figure 2: 'London's four areas' – Source: <https://www.cglearn.it/mysite/civilization/uk-culture/london/> 'last access 20/12/18'.

English sound system had an essential change during the last 1,500 years. The main changes occurred century by century. Few of these changes were produced by people who were trying to learn English and others were made by adults who actually spoke this language introducing some phonological alterations without being theirs intention (Hickey, 2014). These were some of the motives whereby these changes could help to achieve those features that have become particular in MLE. Among young people first changes took place and, then, became supra-regional because those changes

spread all around the capital. One of the authors that we will be mentioned along this study, Raymond Hickey, affirms that all innovations are becoming supra-regional in the end. He claims that:

> '*between innovator and adaptor […]. The innovators are a small number of central members among young female […]. The adaptors, as their name implies, adopt the pronunciation they hear from innovators. At an early stage of a possible change, one can distinguish the different sub-groups, though later when the change is complete or early complete […], then it is not possible to recognise different types of agent anymore'* (Hickey, 2013: 253).

In this case, the most prolific society sub-group is that of young female who looked for a more 'trendy' and 'cool' speaking. It is important to say that innovations were born and soon they died, while some others were adopted in the end by all MLE speakers and became the current pronunciation. The development of the sound system of MLE shows a mixture of influences from early settlement patterns, contact with English language and subsequent developments with the growth and internationalisation of Jamaica or the Caribbean in London.

The English spoken in London has changed drastically in the late decades. The London working class was characterized by a dialect called Cockney, which has been replaced little by little by *Jafaican* (term also used to refer to MLE). The term MLE emerged in multi-ethnic inner city and towns where people from different countries are living nowadays (Cheshire, 2013: 63). It is said that MLE is an example of how fast a language (or, in this case, a sociolect) can change.

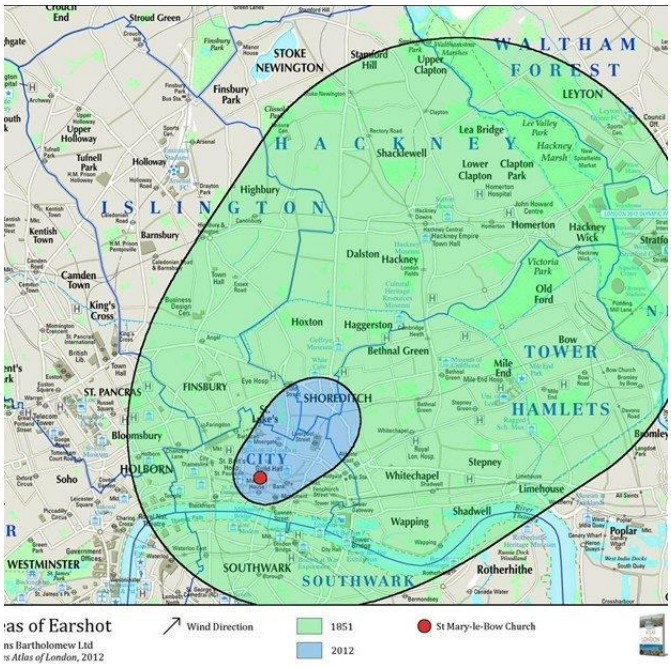
One of the main reasons for the emergence of this sociolect might be 'linked to specific types of community formation in urban areas' (Cheshire, Kerswill, Fox & Torgersen, 2011: 3). As mentioned before, speakers of MLE live in diverse inner-city neighbourhoods, such as Hackney, Brent and Lambeth. Because of this, we can also refer to MLE as a *multiethnolect*, a term used to define an 'emerging and distinct variety of language found in young working-class urban neighbourhoods' (Clyne, 2000: 83). Apparently, multiethnolects are not as homogeneous as other dialects. According to Labov, point of view, multiethnolects can be emerged in places considered as *speech communities* (Labov, 1972):

> *'The speech community is not defined by any marked agreement in the use of language elements, so much as by participation in a set of shared norms; these norms may be observed in overt types of evaluative behaviour, and by the uniformity of abstract patterns of variation which are invariant in respect to particular levels of usage'* (Labov, 1972a: 120).

As was mentioned before, if MLE is going to be debated, first of all, Cockney would have to be considered. It is important to highlight that Cockney refers to both the accent as well as to those who speak it. This accent contains special vocabulary as well as special grammar, accent, pronunciation and rhyming slang. Wells underlines some Cockney's vocabulary that has become into popular colloquialisms, such as *to be on one's tod*, *to have a butcher's* or *a yobbo* (Wells, 1982: 302). In *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED) it is seen that the term *Cockney* is has its origins on 'cock's egg' and the OED's first recorded use of this accent was in 1776. This term was coined by the countrymen of the sixteenth century. However, it was not until the eighteenth century when the phoneticians began to consider Cockney as an accent. It started being a secret language of the London underworld. A real Cockney is a person who is born within hearing distance of the bells of St. Mary le Bow (London). Usually, it is spoken by the working-class East Londoners (East London History. History of the East London Cockney, 2013. Taken from: <https://www.eastlondonhistory.co.uk/history-east-end-cockney/> 'last access: 11/1/19'). In addition, this language variety has been branded inferior according to many people during decades, but up until now Cockney became as an alternative form of the English language. Cockney survives, but not without a change. As explained in the OED, Cockney is 'a type of accent identified as spreading outwards from London and containing features of both RP and such regional accents' (OED, 2017: 118). It is confirmed that Cockney was also used in some William Shakespeare's notes, such as those used by the character of Mistress Quickly. As can be seen, the following extract taken from *Henry IV, Part II* (<https://www.shakespeare.org.uk/explore-shakespeare/shakespedia/shakespeares-plays/henry-iv-part-2/> 'last access: 11/1/19'). Hence, Mistress Quickly is a fictional character which we can find in some of Shakespeare's plays. This character stands out because of her particular way to employ polite speech, which is quite similar to those characters who do not speak her sociolect. To make her highlight more, Shakespeare gives to Mistress Quickly some Cockney pronunciations (Matthews, 1972: 4-5):

> *'I am undone by this going; I warrant you he's an infinitive thing upon my score. Good Master Fang, hold him sure: good Master Snare, let him not 'scape. A' comes continuantly to Pie –coner –saving your manhoods – to buy a saddle; and he is indited to dinner at the Lubber's – head in Lumbert street, to Master Smooth's the silkman: I pray ye, since my exion is entered and my case so openly known to the world, let him be brought in to his answer […]'.* (*Henry IV*, Part II, ii).

As can be seen in the following picture, Cockney accent is/was usually spoken in different areas in London, such as Hackney, Aldgate, Bethnal Green, Bow, Limehouse, Mile End, Old Ford Poplar, Shoreditch, Stepney, Wapping and Whitechapel. All these places are marked by a big green circle and a small blue one in the map.


WALTHAM FOREST
HACKNEY
ISLINGTON
TOWER HAMLETS
CITY
SOUTHWARK
WESTMINSTER
STOKE NEWINGTON
Finsbury Park
Stroud Green
LEYTON
Lea Bridge
Shacklewell
Lower Clapton
Clapton Park
Highbury
Homerton
Hackney Wick
Dalston
Hackney
Victoria Park
Old Ford
Haggerston
Hoxton
Bethnal Green
Mile End
Bow
FINSBURY
SHOREDITCH
ST. PANCRAS
Bloomsbury
HOLBORN
Soho
Whitechapel
Stepney
Limehouse
Wapping
Shadwell
Poplar
Rotherhithe
Camden Town
Kentish Town
King's Cross
Barnsbury
Holloway
Tufnell Park
Upper Holloway
Kingsland
Stamford Hill
Upper Clapton
Lee Valley Park
Hackney Marsh
Hackney Central
Hackney Empire
Town Hall
Homerton Hospital
John Howard Centre
Victoria Park
Mile End Hospital
Bethnal Green
Royal Lon. Hosp.
Whitechapel
Limehouse
All Saints
Wapping
Shadwell
Poplar
Rotherhithe
Ronnie Duck Woodland
Greenland Dock
Canada Water
Crossharbour
Barnsbury
Camden Road
Camden Town
Kentish Town
Kentish Town West
Business Design Centre
Angel
Eye Hosp.
Bethnal Green
Mile End Hospital
Stepney Green
Whitechapel
Royal Lon. Hosp.

classified as a style instead of an accent used mainly by young black people from London or just by anybody with a different ethnic origin. Now, suddenly, languages have become part of the public discourse about the riots. The historian David Starkey stated that:

> *'The whites have become black… Black and white, boy and girl operate in this language together. This language which is wholly false is a Jamaican patois, that's been intruded in England and this is why so many of us have this sense of literally a foreign country'* (Starkey, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2011/aug/13/david-starkey-claims-whites-black>, 2011).

Consequently, David Mitchell could not avoid that comment during the interview, so he decided to response him since his own point of view and tried to make him see that his words were not correct.

> *'You keep talking David about black culture. Black communities are not homogenous. So there are black cultures. Lots of different black cultures. What we need to be doing is… thinking about ourselves not as individual communities… as one community. We need to stop talking about them and us'* (David Mitchell, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2011/aug/13/david-starkey-claims-whites-black>, 2011).

## 3. ATTITUDES OF SPEAKERS TO MLE

Since the emergence of a new sociolect, called academically *Multicultural London English*, British media had a quite interest in it. They gave it a new label, *Jafaican*, which consists on teenager's speech with a particular multi-ethnic style in London inner city (Kerswill, 2014) and which contains negative connotations since it is a blend of *Jamaican* and *fake*, that is, a fake Jamaican when, in fact, MLE is much more than that. In addition, it is important to say that media have the ability to control public's perception; consequently, the term *Jafaican* is mainly used in radio and television getting more and more popular among British people in the last years (Kerswill, 2014). Hence, this helped MLE to become a kind of *lingua franca* (an adopted language used by a group of people that do not share the same mother tongue) by Londoners younger than thirty (Coleman, 2014). Accordingly, Kerswill (2014: 432) states that MLE is:

> *'best seen as the variable output of a 'feature pool' (Mufwene, 2001) derived from the range of language varieties in the inner city, including second-language English, African, Caribbean and Asian Englishes, local dialect (Cockney), London Jamaican Creole (Sebba, 1993) Standard English – and also languages other than English'.*

In any case, the innovations discussed in this project make this multiethnolect quite singular. Authors, like Braber or Jansen, found that the employment of these innovations can establish some differences between the inner and outer city and that they were 'restricted to inner London and that membership in a multicultural friendship network was central to the use of these innovations' (Braber & Jansen, 2018). Nowadays, there are differences between young and adult speakers too. MLE is known as a youth language and it is not popular between adults. Older adults are not speaking it, probably, because MLE started to be spoken when they already grew up (Cheshire; Fox; Kerswill; & Torgersen, 2013). It is mostly reflected by people whose rage of social contacts is wide and extensive (Hill; Watson; Rivers; & Joyce, 2007). Moreover, most of the MLE speakers are young people, but some of them also belong to the working-class. It is said that white people try to turn into 'black'. Usually, this new sociolect was often around music, like rap, hip-hop, grime or bangra (Quinion, 2006).

As was mentioned before, MLE is a mixture of different culture language characteristics, so it does not belong to one specific race. That is the reason of denominating it *multiethnolect*. It is not used only in one place, but in several urban cities. Usually, it is related to low-class people; those who try to make the difference from the rest of London speakers. In any case, MLE teenager speakers do not associate their language with 'talking black'; in fact, they denominate it as slang, where they use their own distinguished lexicon (Cheshire, Hall & Adger, 2017). These same people are the same who ignore or do not pay attention to all the innovations that they are incorporating to this sociolect (Cheshire, Hall & Adger, 2017). In a study purposed by Kerswill (2014), it is said that black males are incapable of changing their MLE language into a more standard one. Furthermore, in 2008, there was a secondary school in Manchester where MLE use was not accepted. This had a great impact on social media, that supported this idea (Kerswill, 2014).

Regardless, London converges people of all kind of ethnicities, especially in inner city, what transforms MLE in an inclusive new variety (Cheshire, Hall & Adger, 2017). The Local Authority states that:

> *'In part this is a result of Hackney's long story of immigration and welcoming people to borough which has resulted in local neighbourhoods that are very diverse where people have an opportunity to mix ad meet people from different religious and ethnic backgrounds. Many people also have personal or family experience of migration and are welcoming to new arrivals'* (London Borough of Hackney Policy Team, 2016: 14).

All in all, not all the comments said express positivism. However, different figures, such as Parliament members or television ones, do not support this point of view (Cheshire, Hall & Adger, 2017). This is the case of the historian David Starkey, already mentioned at the end of chapter two. In this case, MLE could be able to be racialized over time (Cheshire, Hall & Adger, 2017).

# 4. LEXICAL AND PHONOLOGY FEATURES

## 4.1. Main lexical features

Distinctive features of the MLE lexicon arise from its historical development, and are usually classified into three groups: words which have been incorporated from Asia, words from Africa, words from English or words from BE which have become obsolete or restricted in Britain, and innovations which arise internally or from other loanwords sources. Because of the short history of contact between English and the different ethnic dialects, it is possible to differentiate clearly the origins of each word (Palacios, 2017). Thanks to *British Black English* ('any of several varieties of Creole English used in United Kingdom by the children of immigrants from the Commonwealth Caribbean since the 1950's') (*Concise Oxford Companion to the English Language*, 1998), MLE's lexicon has been adopted in a more considerable sense.

Núñez and Palacios (2018) claim that young speakers tend to 'play' with the language, so they are constantly innovating. One main reason for this could be because urban cities (in this case London) include a humongous number of different cultures, which all are in contact. Accordingly, there are four distinct lexical features that can be distinguished in MLE teenager's speech (Palacios, 2018). Then, those lexical innovations will be described following: the use of onomatopoeic or non-lexical words (*ha ha* and *grrr*) (section 4.1.1); the presence of borrowed words from other languages (*skeen* 'OK' and *bravo*) (section 4.1.2); the creation of new lexical items (*LOL* 'laughing out loud' and *fav* 'favourite') (section 4.1.3); and the alteration of the meaning of the words (*sick* 'good' and *ends* 'speaker's own area') (section 4.1.4).

### 4.1.1. Onomatopoeic or non-lexical words

Youth language went through lots of innovations in the last years, but in this section we will focus on the non-lexical words and onomatopoeias. Usually, they are employed to imitate natural sounds or to imitate somebody when the speaker is telling an anecdote (Palacios, 2018). What the speaker tries to do with this is expressing their feelings in a more realistic way, incorporating as much information as they can to the conversation. Some clear examples will be *urgh*, *blah blah blah*, *miau*, *whoops*, *woof*, *ha ha ha*, and *grrr*.

(1) I was like *whoops* I remember one time I was drunk (LIC).

(2) I could go to a funeral I could start laughing so ∅ *ha ha ha* innit (LIC).

### 4.1.2. Words from other languages

Due to the mixture of different ethnicities and cultures, the use of some borrowings from other languages even there is direct contact or not cannot be avoided (Palacios, 2018). Here, young speakers play an important role, as they are constantly exposed and interacting with people who speak different languages. In other words, language contact greatly influences nowadays adolescents (Palacios, 2018). MLE sociolect borrows words from different languages or varieties, such as Jamaican and Afro-Caribbean English (*wah* 'what is going on?' and *skeen* 'OK'); Arabic (*akh* 'brother'); Italian (*bravo* and *mafia*); Hindi (*bandana* 'a kind of rag used to wear on'); French (*café* and *chic*) and Spanish (*hasta la vista* and *tapas*), among others (Palacios, 2018).

(3) On my sixteenth birthday my mum goes . erm 'I know you want cigarette so go out in the garden and have one' I was like 'oh, *skeen*, bye!' (MLEC).

(4) They don't intend to drink round there they drink in all like . *tapas* bars and all stuff all stuff like that… (LIC).

### 4.1.3. New lexical items

Currently, shortening some everyday words has become popular among youth speech, because of economy language. This fact transforms the conversation into a more familiar tone and helps to unite teen's group identity in a better way (Palacios, 2018). As they are getting more frequent in our daily day, these words are becoming ordinary in our speech. Some clear examples will be *cos* 'because', *uni* 'university', *bruv* 'brother', *nuff* 'enough' and *fav* 'favourite'.

(5) It's a bit hard you have to go to *uni* and everything (LIC).

(6) What's your favourite food? What do you like no [my *fav*] I don't mean the teacher mr lasagne I mean the food do you like lasagne? (MLEC).

In Palacios' study (2018) it was found that most teenagers also use abbreviations in their speech. Furthermore, it has been noticed that adolescents tend to use acronyms more frequently than initialisms. As mentioned before, economizing the language is a fact which speakers are focused on, so that we can find terms like MSN 'Microsoft Network', IT 'information technology', YOLO 'you only live once', NP 'no problem', OMG 'oh my god', LOL 'laughing out loud', WTF 'what the fuck' and EMA 'education maintenance allowance'.

(7) When I get my *ema* then I'll get my bus pass myself but I ain't got no money (LIC).

To continue with, another characteristic that stands out in adolescent's language is the employment of prefixes and suffixes, which are popular in youth speech but not so much in the expression of adults (Palacios, 2018). Some of those prefixes and suffixes are the following: *hiper-*, *super-*, *mega-*, *-ish* and *–y*. This kind of prefixes usually denotes the highest quality, so that teenagers use them to intensify what they are saying. However, there are two in particular which can be used by their own, without joining any other word: *hiper* and *mega*. On the contrary, the suffixes mentioned before tend to express familiarity context (Palacios, 2018).

(8) They are becoming too *hyperactive* (LIC).

(9) The way we dress we look *thuggish* (LIC).

### 4.1.4. Meaning change

Changing the meaning of words is an innovation which adolescents are getting more used to do at present time. This mainly affects adjectives, where a positive term gets a negative denotation (Palacios, 2018). Adolescents employ them with the main objective of going against the establishment. For instance, words like *sick* mean 'great', *beef* 'trouble' and *crew* 'a group of friends'. Anyway, in teenager's speech metaphors can also be found, with which they can extend the meaning of the words (Palacios, 2018). This would be the case of words like *ends* 'a speaker's own area', *deep* 'horrible', *safe* 'a greeting' or *making peas* 'making money'.

(10) What *ends* you from? (LIC).

(11) That game is *sick*, it's brilliant mate (LIC).

## 4.2 Main phonological features

In this section, I will discuss the pronunciation of vowels and consonants in MLE sociolect in a brief way, paying special attention to their main characteristics.

### 4.2.1. Vowels

The description of vowels here is based on the system of lexical sets as introduced by Wells in 1980's in his three-volume work *Accents of English*. A lexical set consists in a group of words, which share the same pronunciation for a certain sound in a given variety. Afterwards, this sound system will be illustrated to help us to understand it in a better way.

| Short vowels | | Long vowels | |
|---|---|---|---|
| KIT | /ɪ/ | FLEECE | /i:/ |
| DRESS | /ɛ/ | FACE | /e:/ |
| TRAP | /æ/ | START | /a:/ |
| LOT | /ɒ/ | THOUGHT | /ɒ:/ |
| STRUT | /ʌ/ | SOFT | /ɒ(:)/ |
| FOOT | /ʊ/ | GOOSE | /u:/ |

Table 1: 'John C. Well's RP Vowel System'.

According to Kerswill (2008), the MLE's DRESS vowel has a 'more open quality than in SBE'; in the long vowel system, MLE includes a 'narrow diphthong or monophthong for the lexical set of FACE ([eɪ] or [e:] in place of Cockney [ær])' (Cheshire; Fox; Kerswill; & Torgersen, 2013); this sociolect uses the GOOSE-fronting

(Cheshire; Fox; Kerswill; & Torgersen, 2013), which is strongly promoted by preceding coronals ('articulatory cover-term for alveolar, dental and palate-alveolar consonants referring to sounds that are produced with the blade of the tongue raised form its neutral position') (Crystal, 2008); the KIT set tends to be more central than RP at times (Fox, 2015); according to Kerswill and Cheshire (et al. 2008) the DRESS lexical set has a more open /ɛ/ quality and it is used by both older and younger speakers (Fox, 2015).

However, if the STRUCT vowel is compared between young and old speakers, the first ones have a more 'back and less open STRUT /ʌ/ vowel' (Fox, 2015); the London TRAP vowel is 'more open and more centralized' (Fox, 2015); besides, the FOOT lexical set tends to be 'fronting/centring /ʊ/ among adolescent speakers' (Fox, 2015); nevertheless, the long monophthong START is 'generally much the same in London as RP /a:/' (Fox, 2015); in GOOSE vowel's case, like STRUCT, it is more 'back and less open /u:/' (Fox, 2015). In addition, the LOT lexical vowel went through only 'small changes' (Braber & Jansen, 2018); but, the FOOT vowel is 'more central' (Cheshire; Fox; Kerswill & Torgersen, 2008).

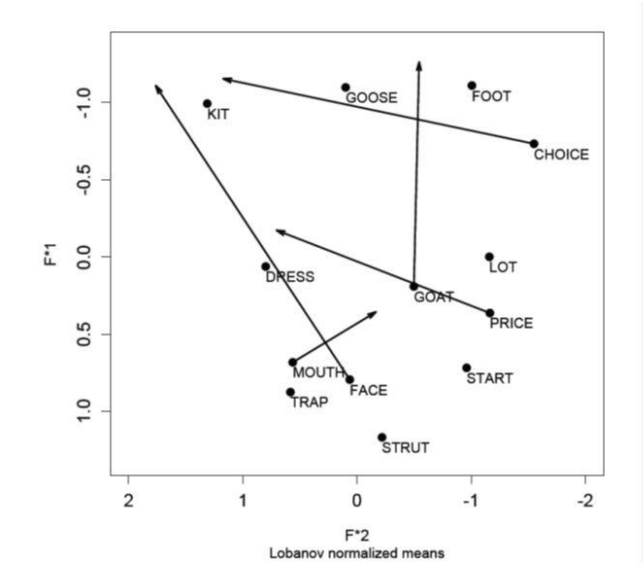
### 4.2.2. Diphthongs

| Rising diphthongs | |
|---|---|
| PRICE/PRIDE | /ai/ |
| MOUTH | /aʊ/ |
| CHOICE | /ɒi/ |
| GOAT | /oʊ/ |

Table 2: 'John C. Wells' RP Diphthong Sound System'.

According to Jansen and Braber (2018), there is a diphthong shift reversal. It consists in rising diphthongs with peripheral onsets and long trajectories (Wells, 1982). In other words, low for FACE and GOAT, mid-front for MOUTH and mid-back for

PRICE. Moreover, Cheshire, Kerswill, Fox & Torgersen (2011) state that inner city speakers have a FACE and GOAT trajectories much shorter, where now 'FACE is high-front and GOAT is high-back'. Nevertheless, the MOUTH and PRICE lexical sets have been 'lowered and the trajectories shortened or absent' (Cheshire, Kerswill, Fox & Torgersen, 2011). This will be illustrated in the following images.




Diphthong vowels of elderly male speaker from Hackney born 1918

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Figure 4: 'Diphthong system of elderly male speaker from Hackney born 1918' – Source: <https://slideplayer.com/slide/3061144/11/images/22/Diphthong+vowels+of+elderly+male+speaker+from+Hackney+born+1918.jpg> 'last access: 23/5/19'.

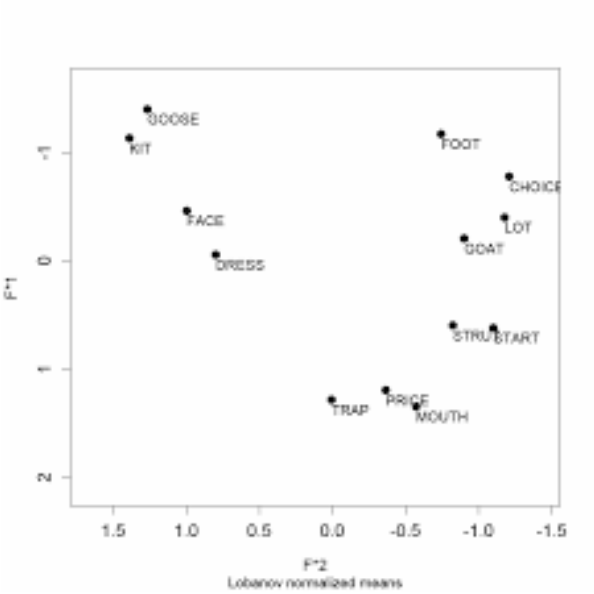


Figure 5: 'London inner-city vowels used by Multicultural London English project adolescent speakers (aged 16–19) of Afro-Caribbean origin. (For diphthongs, only onsets are shown)' – Source: Cheshire; Kerswill; Fox & Torgersen. 2011 'last access: 23/5/19'.

To conclude this section, a brief summary of south-east London changes established in the rising diphthongs will be given. It will be a small evidence of diphthong shift reversal found in MLE multiethnolect (Kerswill, 2013).

| | |
|---|---|
| MOUTH | [ɛ̯ʊ] → [æʊ] → [aʊ] |
| GOAT | [əʊ] → [ɔ:] |
| PRICE | [ɔɪ] → [ɒɪ] |
| FACE | [æeɪ] |

Table 3: 'Diphthong changes' (Kerswill, 2013).

### 4.2.3. Consonants

The main consonant features can be summed up in the following way. One difference between MLE and RP is that 'glottal stops replace /p/, /t/ and /k/ in intervocalic position' (Palacios, 2017). It is also known about the use of a 'retracted voiceless velar

plosive in word-initial position in such a way that the usual pronunciation of [k] approaches that of [q]' (Kerswill et al. 2008), with other words, there is a *K-backing* in MLE (Palacios, 2017). This innovation was not 'previously described and not used by elderly Londoners' (Cheshire; Kerswill; Fox & Torgersen, 2008). Another characteristic that will be seen is the *H-dropping*. This feature is not 'widely attested in MLE, even though in traditional Cockney the /h/ was not pronounced in stressed contexts' (Palacios, 2017). The H-dropping is produced in stressed word-initial position; but, as said above, nowadays this quality 'is declining in the Southeast' (Kerswill; Cheshire; Fox & Torgersen, 2007). The young speakers in Hackney have 'less H-dropping than the elderly speakers overall' (Cheshire; Kerswill; Fox & Torgersen, 2008).

To continue with, one of the most distinctive features of MLE is the fronting of the dental fricatives /ð/ and /Θ/ as /v/ and /f/ (Palacios, 2017). Both features are 'well established in the South of England and beyond' (Kerswill; Cheshire; Fox & Torgersen, 2007). However, the *TH-fronting* is located in word-initial and final position, whereas the *DH-fronting* is 'non-initially' (Kerswill; Cheshire; Fox & Torgersen, 2007). An interesting feature about the *TH-fronting* is that 'elderly speakers are less likely than the young speakers to have word-initial *TH-fronting*' (Cheshire; Kerswill; Fox & Torgersen, 2008). MLE also stands out because of its *DH-stopping*, which 'involves word-initial [d] for [ð]' (Kerswill; Cheshire; Fox & Torgersen, 2007).). The last consonant's characteristic is the word-initial labiodental /r/, which is a form that was thought 'to be diffusing throughout Britain from London' (Kerswill; Cheshire; Fox & Torgersen, 2007). To conclude this section, a table of examples will be illustrated to clarify the innovations explained above.

| Innovations | Examples |
|---|---|
| H-dropping | *hammer* |
| K-backing | *cousin* |
| TH-fronting | *bath* |
| DH-fronting | *mother* |
| DH-stopping | *then* |
| Labiodental /r/ | *red* |
| Glottal stops replacement | *better* |

Table 4: ‘Examples of consonant innovations’ (Kerswill; Cheshire; Fox & Torgersen, 2007).

# 5. MAIN GRAMMAR AND DISCOURSE FEATURES

In this chapter, multiple MLE grammar variables will be analysed paying special attention to British teenagers. Because of its high level of innovations, adolescent's language has been extensively studied (Cheshire, Fox, Kerswill & Torgersen, 2008; and Palacios, 2017) among others. Overall, this multiethnolect has been studied in its lexico-semantic, phonological and grammar areas; nevertheless, it can be said that the latter area of grammar has been discussed less than phonology, for example (Palacios, 2011).

Additionally, the reason for the origin of all these innovations could be the idea of making language easier, simpler, trying to stay away from complex structures (Palacios, 2011). Those grammar innovations that will be here described are the following: the emergence of new quotative expressions (*go*, *be like* and *this is* + speaker) (section 5.1.1); the presence of a new pronoun *man* (section 5.1.2); a particular use of the definite and indefinite article (section 5.1.3); the use of the past tense of the verb *to be* (section 5.1.4); the manifestation of pragmatic markers (section 5.1.5); the different negation uses (section 5.1.6); the prevalence of vague language (section 5.1.7) and the role of new intensifiers (section 5.1.8).

## 5.1. Quotative expressions

It is very common for adolescents to use constructed language when they are telling a story or an anecdote to their peers. As a result, their range of quotative markers is rapidly developing (Palacios, 2011). These adolescents started to introduce reported speech with two different forms: *go* and *be like*. Thus, MLE began to see traditional reporting verbs (*say*, *tell*, *ask* and *think*) as less common (Palacios, 2017). When *be like* was first used in the 80's, it was mainly used in the first person. This would be common when the speaker is talking about his/her personal thoughts (Secova, 2018). According to Fox (2012), currently, the first person *be like* will increase its use until the third person accompanied by non-lexicalised sounds and gestures. In this way, MLE speakers will perceive their inner monologue function turning it into actual direct speech (Secova, 2018). Even though this innovation has become common between people around the age of thirty, it is still associated with youth language. Some *be like* examples will be illustrated in the following sentences.

(12) It's *like* 'Woah – girls over the place. I', say. Girls are scary – especially in groups (Sugar Lad, 2010: 7).

(13) 'I will be back by one o'clock', he *went* (LIC).

Despite this, there is also another new quotative employed in this sociolect. The expression *this is* + speaker is popular among London adolescents between eight and nineteen years old (Palacios, 2017). Furthermore, children between eight and nine years old usually employ this innovation to represent the actions in the same way as they happened, as can be seen in example 5 below (Cheshire, Kerswill, Fox & Torgersen, 2011). Furthermore, this innovative form also stands out because of its different uses: according to Secova (2018), it describes expressions, states and feelings, among others. Although *this is* + speaker is not used as much as *be like* among teenagers, both started being a description marker to develop into a full-fledged quotative (Secova, 2018). It is important to say that these innovated quotatives are strongly favoured in first person contexts.

(14) *This is them* 'What's that smell that's coming out?' (LIC).

(15) *This is him* 'blah' (LIC).

(16) *This is me* [followed by an action] (Cheshire, Kerswill, Fox & Torgersen, 2011).

### 5.2. New pronoun *man*

In this section, the pronoun *man* will be explained, as well as its different properties. Thus, this pronoun can be used as first, second or third person and without a bound variable (Hall, 2018). In addition, authors such as Rissanen state that this pronoun disappeared in the fifteenth century; however, nowadays it is re-emerging in inner cities among British teenagers (Cheshire, 2013: 609). Moreover, membership category and emphasis are two rhetorical functions of this MLE innovation according to Cheshire (Palacios, 2017: 44). Consequently, Cheshire (2013) emphasized the process which this new pronoun went through for its emergence.

(17) See *man* you got to watch the news *man* (LIC).

Besides, this pronoun can express different emotions, like surprise or emphasis, as well as personal points of view. In example 18, *man* is employed as to emphasise his experience (Cheshire, 2013); while in example 19, what the pronoun makes is that all the focuses lay on the speaker, his/her opinion is what really matters in the sentence.

(18) Before I got arrested *man* paid for my own ticket to go Jamaica you know. But I've never paid to go on no holidays before this time I paid (Cheshire, 2013: 609).

(19) I don't really mind how, how my girl looks if she looks decent yeah and there's one bit of her face that just looks mashed yeah I don't care it's her personality *man*'s looking at (Cheshire, 2013: 621).

### 5.3. Article system

Currently, MLE is used as a way to simplify SBE, and is what young speakers are doing with the article system. In this case, adolescents tend to not differentiate the indefinite article (*a/an*) and definite article (*the*) before words beginning with a vowel. This means that, '*a* [ə] before consonant-initial words and *an* [ən] before vowel-initial words; and *the* [ðə] when it occurs before a consonant-initial word and *the* [ði] when occurring before a vowel-initial word' (Palacios, 2017: 49). In spite of this, London adolescent speakers also use the pre-consonant forms in both contexts (Cheshire, Kerswill, Fox & Torgersen, 2011).

(20) SBE: *a* pear – MLE: *a* pear (Cheshire, Kerswill, Fox & Torgersen, 2011).

(21) SBE: *an* apple – MLE: *a* apple (Cheshire, Kerswill, Fox & Torgersen, 2011).

This youth language change dues to the combination of some factors, such as age, ethnicity and place of residence, while linguistic factors did not provide such a big relevance (Gabrielatos, Torgersen, Hoffman & Fox, 2010).

#### *The*

As mentioned above, this MLE innovation consists in using *the* [ðə] before both consonant and vocalic following word. As can be seen in Pak (2016: 19), the phonological vowel reduction provokes this variant in *the*. Concretely, an unstressed-vowel reduction, since it passes from [ði] to [ðə], phonologically speaking. This

corresponds to an allomorphic change, but not orthographic. In addition, Fox (2015: 140) states that there are some English varieties which do not follow the standard rules; in this case, MLE's definite article employs the form [ðə] continued by words that begin with both vocal and consonant followed by the insertion of a glottal stop /ʔ/.

(22) If you don't want me to take *the* [ðəʔ] *elephant* (Pak, 2016).

*A/An*

The use of the indefinite article in this multiethnolect corresponds with the form *a* [ə] in front of vowel and consonant-initial word (Pak, 2016). Its origin points to a group of Bangladeshi adolescents who were living in London and that influenced Anglo speakers (Cheshire, Kerswill, Fox & Torgersen, 2011). Besides this, Gabrielatos, Torgersen, Hoffman and Fox (2010) have noticed that this innovation is more popular between non-Anglo than Anglo speakers. Furthermore, this innovative tendency is due to the ethnic minority community (Fox, 2015); however, this did not stop it from becoming frequent among current MLE teenagers. All in all, the allomorphic simplification of [ə] indicates a reduce redundancy in the indefinite article system and, as with the definite article, MLE speakers tend to introduce a glottal stop /ʔ/ between [ə] and the followed vowel-initial word.

(23) But this in college they treat you like *a* [əʔ] *adult* (LIC).

5.4. Past tense verb *to be*

In SBE, it is well known that the past tense of the verb *to be* is *I was, you were, he/she/it was, we were, you were* and *they were* with the negative form *wasn't* and *weren't*. However, MLE stands out because of its language innovations. London teenager speakers have introduced some changes, such as using the form *was* in the past tense paradigm instead of swapping with the form *were* and also the employment of *was* in positive contexts and *were* in negatives (Cheshire, Kerswill, Fox & Torgersen, 2011).

(24) It's like Ramses' revenge and we *was* at Chessington and it yeah I didn't don't like it when it holds you down (LIC).

(25) An hour before that tutorial we done it. And then into her tutorial, *weren't* it? (LIC).

There is a further distinction between inner and outer London. On one hand, in Hackney, among young speakers the non-standard form *was* is more popular than among adults (Palacios, 2017: 48). Moreover, they also employ the non-standard *weren't* and the non-standard *wasn't* in negative contexts. On the other hand, in Havering, with positive contexts MLE speakers use *was* for all persons and with negative sentence the form *weren't* for all persons too. One of the main reasons of these differences could be language contact, considering that Hackney has a bigger multi-ethnic mixture (Cheshire & Fox, 2013). All in all, this MLE innovation could be clearly defined as a complex phenomenon, in which many factors took part in it, for instance, 'friendship networks and social integration' (Cheshire & Fox, 2013).

### 5.5. Pragmatic markers

In general English speech there are many different pragmatic markers, for instance *okay, eh, yeah, huh, right, you get me, you know* or *you know what I mean*, as explained in Palacios (2017); although, there is one in particular that stands out more than the others, *innit*. People tend to employ them to confirm that the message is being understood and also to keep the interlocutor's attention during the conversation (Palacios, 2011). In addition, all of these pragmatic markers tend to be orally expressed, involve the listener in the conversation and also express confirmation by the interlocutor when receiving the speaker's information; all in all, this comprehend some of their main features (Palacios, 2014). In any case, it is important to highlight that the pragmatic marker *innit* will be one of the most used by MLE young speakers (Palacios, 2011). In the *Urban Dictionary*, the term is defined as a 'contraction of *isn't it, isn't he/she, aren't they, isn't there* and many other end-of-sentence questions' (*Urban Dictionary*, 2003). In other words, *innit* could be the substitute of all those examples mentioned above.

(26) You are the man in the house now, *innit* (LIC).

(27) I don't like people talking about people that's rude or if that girl's fat or fat girl or this we don't like them things. It's. it's cruel *innit* we just like (LIC).

Furthermore, it is generally acknowledged that this MLE innovation has spread from the capital city to the rest of the country, due to the multi-ethnic speakers that reside in London (Fox & Pichler, 2012). Additionally, this new pragmatic marker can be used to represent any operator, for instance *to have*, *to be* or *to do* (Palacios, 2011).

(28) I got a sister *innit* so she sends me clothes (LIC).

(29) It's good, *innit*? (Palacios, 2011).

(30) There was a small Indian teacher out of the way and we open the door and ran to the toilet *innit* where I need to go (LIC).

Thus, *innit* has become a way of standing out the speaker's attitude by expressing surprise or emphasis and also to highlight the relationship established by the participants in the interaction by softening voice, for instance (Palacios, 2017). In addition, *innit* has another interesting characteristic: its positional flexibility.

(31) We got two separate rooms, *innit*? (LIC).

(32) Look, it's their problem *innit,* I mean. I just wanna get over these bloody things (Andersen 2001:133).

### 5.6. Negation

There is another MLE grammatical feature that stands out, the system of negative polarity, which has different characteristics that do not correspond with SBE (Palacios, 2013: 212). These four negative phenomena are starting to rise from young Londoners and they are leading their way through adult's speech. The main features of negation can be described as follows:

*Ain't*

This innovation is known as a non-standard construction, which replaces some forms like *am not, is not, are not, has not* and *have not* (Quirk et al. 1985). On one hand, *ain't* is employed as a copula and an auxiliary with the verb *to be*, and on the other hand, when it is used with the verb *to have*, it does not need any subject (Bonsignori, 2013). Both can be accepted in positive and negative statements (Palacios, 2017).

(33) I'm going out with my bird now, *ain't* I? (Bonsignori, 2013).

(34) I *ain't* going no water I *ain't* going no water ride [laughter] no me and my make-up boy (LIC).

Furthermore, there are cases were *ain't* with the verb *to have* is restricted to as an auxiliary function and it can also go together with *got* (Palacios, 2013). An example which clarifies what has already been explained follows.

(35) I *ain't got* it erm but they've (LIC).

To finish, Palacios (2013 & 2017) also confirms that there are some non-standard forms, such as *innit, nope* or *dunno*, which can be used less frequently.

(36) I *dunno* I like this colour it's alright (LIC).

*Never*

This negative adverb can be used as past tense negator or as a negative preterit according to Palacios (2017). In standard language, *never* tends to express universal temporal negation; however, Palacios (2013) made some studies where *never* was not only employed in the case before mentioned, but also to an event in the past. Moreover, there are authors, for instance Cheshire, who pointed out that the language's negative cycle has been cut off by the standardisation process (Palacios, 2010).

(37) I *never* meant it like that (Palacios, 2013).

*Multiple negation*

This innovation consists in double or multiple negatives in the same structure, resulting as negative concord (Palacios, 2016). Its intention is mainly to intensify the negative meaning of the sentence, as in the following examples provided.

(38) If I'm working with all the boys then we're all hyperactive all day so it *don't* make *no* difference (LIC).

(39) Yeah it was. When I like got my belly done I went 'ah I *don't* want *nothing* else done' (LIC).

It is well known that this characteristic is usually employed in non-standard varieties of English and is typically founded in youth speech (Palacios, 2013). Besides,

negative concord can be also combined in several cases, for instance: with other non-standard negatives, with the third person singular present *don't* or with first person singular subjects followed by third and second person plural subjects (Palacios, 2017).

*Don't*

The usage of the third person singular *don't* prevails over the negative form *doesn't* among MLE teenager speakers (Palacios, 2017); nevertheless, Palacios (2016: 48) has proved that this does not occur in adult's language.

(40) But it *don't* bother me. How I am's how I am (LIC).

This particularity can be conditioned by speaker's gender and ethnic origin: on the one hand, male and female MLE speakers employ it in a similar way; while Anglo teenagers are more familiar with the employment of *don't* than those who are non-Anglo (Palacios, 2017).

## 5.7. Vague language

MLE shows a high number of vague words and expressions, such as general extenders (a*nd stuff*, *or something*) and placeholders (*thingy*, *whatsit*).

*General extenders*

General extenders are usually constituted by a conjunction (*and*, *or*) plus a noun phrase. In addition, there are two in particular which are the most widely used: *and everything* and *and stuff*. All these things considered, it has to be specified that they are placed in final-position clause.

(41) It's quite convenient erm. No just to family and friends *and stuff* (LIC).

(42) She used to live round there and erm a couple of years ago probably when I was about nine *or something* she moved to Suffolk (LIC).

It is said that the function of general extenders is to denote that the previous word as part of a set. General extenders have more pragmatic functions: summarising, intensifying the message (Palacios, 2017: 48) or establishing common ground (Palacios,

2011: 118). Moreover, nowadays, teenagers have the need of belonging to a group, to a community, so using these words helps them to reach their purpose (Palacios, 2011).

*Placeholders*

They can be defined as lexical words that are, semantically speaking, empty or almost empty (Núñez & Palacios, 2015). This innovation avoids pronouncing a certain term with difficulties or avoids using some words that could be impolite (Núñez & Palacios, 2015).

(43) Get it down as low as you can it's alright in Turkey and that when you're buying bags and *whatnot* (LIC).

(44) Yeah they said they're gonna put him in some TA *thingy* (LIC).

This last placeholder is considered the most common between MLE speakers. General placeholders are used more frequently by adults than by adolescents (Palacios, 2017); even though, teenagers have a large list of them, such as *stuff*, *thingybob*, *thingummy(bob)*, *whatnot*, *whosit* and *whathisname* (Núñez & Palacios, 2015). Moreover, apart from communicative purposes, they are also employed as an in-group identity marker (Palacios, 2017).

## 5.8. Intensifiers

It is well known that there are some adjectives which are employed by MLE speakers whose intention is to intensify what they are saying by using different adjectives or adverbs transformed into intensifiers (Núñez & Palacios, 2018). In other words, according to Bolinger (1972: 17) an intensifier is 'any device that scales a quality, whether up or down or somewhere between the two' and, furthermore, one of their major purposes is to transmit the message in a more expressive way (Núñez & Palacios, 2018). MLE adolescents prefer the use of intensifiers such as *really*, *so*, *well*, *pretty*, *very*, *fucking* and *bloody*, as explained in Palacios & Núñez's study (2015).

(45) Cos there's not like *really* many English people up there in the market (LIC).

(46) This is him 'Well I'd be *pretty fucking* pissed off if somebody took my jacket' (LIC).

Besides, it is well known that an excessive intensifier employment could cause its loss of value, so that a new intensifier could take its place (Núñez & Palacios, 2018: 121); in other words, teenager's language is constantly developing. In current English, intensifiers are frequently used in informal contexts due to their emotional character; while, in the other hand, they are not so popular in formal cases, for instance, academic writings (Méndez & Pahta, 2010). All these things considered, we will pay especial attention to *proper* and *bare*, two new frequent intensifiers among British adolescents.

*Proper*

Firstly, *proper's* origin is multiple since it is composed by a borrowing from French (*proper*) and also from Latin (*proprius*). This fact was stated by the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED), where it can also be found its use as an intensifier of nouns in 'depreciative or derogative contexts'. All in all, *proper's* function as an intensifier will be detailed in the following. Due to the language contact established in London, gender and ethnicity could be two factors associated to the emergence of this new intensifier; however, Núñez and Palacios's study (2018) clarifies that these are not clear conditions of use among MLE speakers. Furthermore, it is an innovation which can only be used is positive contexts followed by negative, positive and neutral semantic prosody (Núñez & Palacios, 2018).

(47) He's *proper dumb* (LIC).

(48) I was like *proper confident* (LIC).

In addition, youth language employs this intensifier with the purpose of describing somebody's negative traits and, in some occasions, it can be found more than one intensifier (including *proper*) in the same clause (Núñez & Palacios, 2018).

(49) The teacher used to get *proper really badly* pissed off by Charlotte (LIC).

*Bare*

The adjective *bare* has a Germanic origin (*bær*) which meaning is 'without covering', 'empty' and 'simple' (OED). It can play different roles in a sentence, such as a verb, an adverb and with a nominal function (Núñez & Palacios, 2018). Despite this, MLE teenagers tend to employ *bare* in a distinct way: as an intensifier.

(50) We all come back together talking about *bare* stuff (LIC).

(51) You could see him *bare* foot (LIC).

As in the case of *proper*, neither gender nor ethnicity are relevant factors for the employment of this new intensifier and, according to *proper*, *bare* can be found modifying adjectives of neutral, positive and negative semantic prosody (*high*, *nice* and *pissed*) (Núñez & Palacios, 2018).

(52) He's *bare good* though (LIC).

(53) Go wear hat *bare low* like, so no-one can see your face (LIC).

To conclude this section, in Núñez and Palacios's work (2018) it was noticed that there was one case where *bare* modifies a prepositional phrase and not an adjective as it was frequent. Aforementioned case will be illustrated below.

(54) When I was in year nine I loved maths. But then when I got up in the upper I got *bare out of maths* (LIC).

## 6. CONCLUSION

This study has given an overview of *Multicultural London English* (MLE), focusing on its main features. Chapter 2 has summarised the history of this sociolect alluding to the main historical events and MLE language process in the past centuries. Chapter 3 reviews some of the attitudes of MLE speakers towards this multiethnolect, where British media played an important role. Chapter 4 has succinctly examined the lexical and phonological characteristics of MLE, while chapter 5 has been concerned with its grammar innovations.

To conclude this project, I would like to say that, after researching the topic of this dissertation, I have got to know myself better, developing my own English discourse. Even though I was born in New Jersey, I came to Spain when I was just seven and continue learning English here at school. Moreover, I spent one year in Ireland improving my English skills. So, currently I still have some American English features in my head as well as SBE. I especially realised that while I was doing this study. I have noticed that I share some of those MLE's features above explained. Usually, I tend to employ quite a lot the intensifiers *really* and *pretty*; the expressions *be like* and *this is* + speaker; the general extenders *or something*, *and stuff* and *and everything*; and the new pronoun *man*. Accordingly, is there any connexion between these cultures?

In any case, I hope to have succeeded in uncovering the main features that exist in MLE's grammar. The influence of different languages in contact in England's capital is a crucial factor to explain the current situation of MLE. It has been noted that this multilingual variety is becoming the vernacular English of London, even though its multi-ethnic situation. Moreover, the main purpose of this study was to describe MLE's grammar innovations, those that make a difference among adult's and adolescent's language use, namely the emergence of new quotative expressions (*be like* and *this is* + speaker, for instance), the prevalence of vague language (*and stuff* and *thingy*) and a vernacular use of the definite and indefinite article. To summarise, MLE plays an important role in the local, regional or national identities of speakers from throughout the capital of England.

To finish my dissertation, I will say that I think that nowadays teenagers are leading a change, particularly a change in English language with the emergence of MLE. Adolescents are constantly socialising with other languages, so that the

appearance of new interaction styles cannot be avoided. We have seen that London teenagers stand out because of their distinguished lexico-grammatical features. Therefore, should we fight against these innovations (like David Starkey or the Manchester's school) or should we support them?

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